



**Marc Elrich**  
County Executive



**Darren M. Popkin**

Sheriff

**Office of the Sheriff**  
**Domestic Violence Coordinating Council**  
Thursday, March 12, 2020  
5:00 PM – 7:00 PM  
Family Justice Center 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
600 Jefferson Plaza, Suite 500, Rockville, Maryland 20852

**Minutes**

*Due to the developing COVID-19 public health crisis and guidance from national, state, and local government officials surrounding large gatherings, the Chair of the DVCC allowed members to call into the meeting.*

**Members:** Debbie Feinstein, Chair (Montgomery County Office of the State's Attorney); Tom Manion, Vice Chair (Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff); The Honorable Karen Ferretti (District Court for Montgomery County); Ingrid Gonzalez (Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services – Parole and Probation); Tina Michaels (Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation – Pre-trial Services); Amy Palumbo (Community Member); Ronald Whalen (Community Member); Smita Varia, Staff (Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff);

**Members on phone:** Spencer Cantrell (Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse); Laurie Duker (Court Watch Montgomery); Eshigo Okasili (Community Member); Izola Shaw (Community Member); Mindy Thiel (Community Member);

**Absent:** Nicole Drew (Montgomery County Commission for Women); Chief Marcus Jones (Montgomery County Department of Police); The Honorable Sidney Katz (Montgomery County Council); The Honorable Rebecca Smondrowski (Montgomery County Public School – Board of Education);

**Guests:** Rae Brown (House of Ruth); Marie Sandridge (Member of the Public), Maddie Grim and Sam Chuan (Interns for the Family Justice Center)

**Guests on phone:** Tazeen Ahmad (Montgomery County Commission for Women); Assistant Chief Ron Smith, Captain Amy Daum and Lieutenant Gerald McFarland (Montgomery County Department of Police);

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

Debbie Feinstein welcomed all members and guests. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves.

## **II. Approval of November Minutes**

The January 9, 2020 DVCC meeting minutes were reviewed. Tom Manion proposed a motion to approve the minutes without revision. The motion was seconded by Ron Whalen and passed.

## **III. Announcements**

Debbie Feinstein announced that RespectFest has been postponed due to concerns about the Coronavirus. The new date will be in the fall of 2020. The video contest winners will be announced on social media this semester.

Tom Manion announced that the Family Justice Center will remain open under normal operating status. Debbie Feinstein said that the State's Attorney's Office will not be meeting with anyone in person, but to the extent the courts are open, all court dockets will be covered.

Judge Ferretti asked about any restrictions on orders to the Safe Passage Center and the Abuser Intervention Program. Through discussion, it was reported that judges can order respondents into the Abuser Intervention Program over the duration of the order, meaning this will not be a problem during the public health crisis. However, regarding the Safe Passage Center, respondents must complete an intake within a week of the final protective order hearing, and Judge Ferretti wants to make sure that this is possible. She wants to make sure it would not be a violation if intakes were not able to be completed due to any changes in operating status. Smita Varia said that Teresa Bennett was unable to attend the meeting but did send an email with a status update. Teresa Bennett wrote that she is working with both the Abused Persons Program and Family Services International (the contractor for the Betty Ann Krahnke Center and the Safe Passages Center) to ensure they are responding appropriately to COVID-19, particularly as it might impact the Betty Ann Krahnke Domestic Violence Shelter. They have processes in place to separate residents, and they can identify one wing as an "isolation" wing if necessary. Additionally, if they need to close the shelter for new residents, they can place those new residents in a motel temporarily. They are committed to doing everything they can to ensure that no Montgomery County resident victim of domestic violence is placed at risk of harm from either this virus or intimate partner violence. She is committed to being open and transparent about what they are doing, so any member of the committee that has questions or concerns about this is welcome to contact her directly. Judge Ferretti will follow up with the Judge Greenberg to figure out how to order Safe Passage Center visitation in light of the current health crisis.

## **IV. Public Testimony**

Marie Sandridge, a survivor of domestic violence, read a testimony on her experience with domestic violence and shared her concerns with the County's response to her case.

## **V. Committee Reports**

### **A. Legislative and Policy Planning Committee – *Spencer Cantrell, Chair***

Spencer Cantrell has updated a document she created on domestic violence bills this legislative session. Currently, she doesn't know if any hearings will be postponed because of Coronavirus. The next legislative meeting is on March 18<sup>th</sup> and it will be a conference call.

Debbie Feinstein announced that the strangulation bill was passed on the House Floor, and yesterday it passed out of the Senate Committee. After it passes the 3<sup>rd</sup> reader, the

bills will go to cross over where the Senate reviews the House bill and the House reviews the Senate bill. Since the bills are identical, there will be no delay. The Governor should then sign the bill into law. This new bill would make strangulation an automatic first degree assault, which would make it a felony. This would mean that offenders would have to serve a minimum of 50% of their sentence. Debbie Feinstein thanked the members of the Council for their support and testimony to make this bill pass.

**B. Offender Program and Policy Committee – Tina Michaels, Chair**

Tina Michaels reported that Judge Bernard has joined the Offender Program and Policy committee. Judge Bernard wanted to address an issue about GPS monitoring. When people on pretrial have GPS monitoring, they are being monitored all the time to make sure they are not entering the exclusion zones set up by the court conditions. However, when the defendants get sentenced to GPS monitoring through probation, the pretrial monitoring automatically ends because supervision moves to the Department of Parole and Probation. However, Probation does not have the equipment readily available, and it takes a while for the defendants to be assigned a Parole Officer. The committee is going to look deeper into this issue to try to resolve the gap in services. The committee is also working on exploring ways to offer an abuser intervention program for juveniles and offering the Abuser Intervention Program in the jails.

**C. Victim Services Committee update - Tom Manion, Chair**

Tom Manion reported that one of the major initiatives the committee is working on is setting up a training for local attorneys so that they can take pro bono protective order cases. The plan was to have the training early in the year; however, the planning of the training was more involved than initially anticipated. The training will take place either late summer or early fall to allow time to make sure the training is robust. Additionally, the Family Justice Center had started working with Ayuda as an offsite partner a few months ago. They are a nonprofit that provides pro bono legal services to foreign born victims of intimate partner violence. The FJC is now in early discussions with Ayuda leadership to bring them on site in the next couple of months. This would be a great benefit to the clients at the Family Justice Center who have legal questions that Client Assistants cannot answer.

**D. Education and Outreach Committee - Debbie Feinstein, Chair**

As Debbie Feinstein mentioned at the start of the meeting, RespectFest is going to be postponed until the Fall due to the coronavirus crisis.

**VI. Adjournment**

Debbie Feinstein, Chair, adjourned the meeting at 6:01 pm.

**The next DVCC meeting will be on May 14, 2020, 5pm-7pm at the Family Justice Center**



**Domestic Violence Coordinating Council**